

Public Health Education

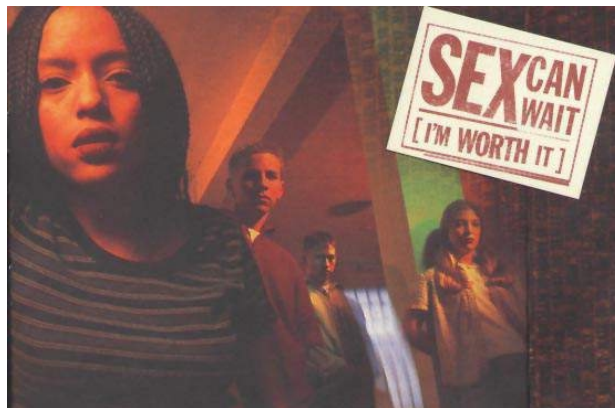
Mission

To provide information and services that result in a more informed public and healthier children, adults, and families.

Summary of Activities

The **Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH)** provides public health education focused on prevention of unhealthy behavior and changing or abating existing unhealthy behavior. Public health programs supported by the ISDH include the Minority Health Initiative, Childhood Hazards Education & Prevention, AIDS Education & Prevention, and the Governor's Council for Fitness & Sports.

The Maternal and Child Health Services (MCHS) division is responsible for improving the health of women, infants, children, and adolescents by providing education and prevention services throughout the state. MCHS works with the Indiana Perinatal Network to provide bi-annual state conferences for health care professionals and consumers. Past conferences have covered preventing infant mortality, postpartum depression, and safe sleep for infants. MCHS and the Perinatal Network also sponsor a statewide media campaign, "Baby First...Right from the Start," aimed at both health care providers and the public. Materials are distributed to pregnant women through the Indiana Family Helpline. *Perinatal Perspectives*, a quarterly newsletter reach consumers and health care professionals with the latest up-to-date information.



Abstinence education is provided by the Project RESPECT program, funded by state funds and the federal Abstinence Education Block Grant. Project RESPECT funds are distributed to community groups to support abstinence education in regards to the sexual behavior of adolescents and teens. The Child Care Health Consultant program was implemented in May, 2003 by the ISDH to provide guidance to child care providers regarding the health and safety of children cared for in out-of-home childcare settings by helping childcare providers identify and move toward compliance with standards set by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Federal funds support the Genomics Program at the ISDH, which provides genetics education for professionals and consumers via presentations and seminars to genetics professionals and the quarterly publication, *Transcriptions*. The Genomics Program is also developing a population-based folic acid education campaign to be launched in 2004.

The **Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Agency (ITPC)** works to change the cultural perception and social acceptability of tobacco use in Indiana by providing education and outreach to Hoosiers on the dangers presented by exposure to tobacco smoke and tobacco products and seeks to reduce or eliminate such exposure. The ITPC funds various community program and a statewide media campaign (www.WhiteLies.tv) to assist in educating the public on the hazards of tobacco use and exposure.

The **Coroners Training Board** provides public health education in the form of establishing statewide standards for death investigation procedures and providing appropriate training to county coroners and their deputies.

External Factors

Indiana was one of 46 states to enter a November, 1998 settlement with the tobacco industry to resolve a class action lawsuit filed against the tobacco industry. Indiana has chosen to utilize funds received from the tobacco industry settlement primarily for health care purposes and programs. This funding source has allowed an expansion of tobacco education and smoking cessation projects and has provided funding for innovation in addressing other public health concerns.

However, tobacco manufacturers have recently made claims of an inability to meet the payments required in the settlement agreement due to the influx of judgments against them in lawsuits brought by smokers or their relatives. Settlement payments to the states are negatively impacted by declining nationwide smoking rates. These factors will heavily influence the future of settlement payments to the states, including Indiana, possibly resulting in decreased settlement payments.

A major external factor facing the Coroners Training Board is the fact that coroners in Indiana are elected officials. Thus, they usually require a great deal of education and training regarding death investigation procedures.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

The ISDH continues to sponsor the Nicotine Replacement Program in which state-funded Community Health Centers distribute free nicotine patches to clients in need of smoking cessation services. Every Community Health Center offers some type of smoking cessation service; some provide the nicotine patch and all provide individual and group support services.

ITPC partners have conducted over 4,700 activities at the local level, such as implementing prevention and education programs in schools, developing cessation networks, and raising awareness of tobacco prevention efforts. The Indiana Youth Tobacco Survey showed a decrease in smoking rates of high-school students, from 32% in 2000 to 23% in 2002.

Plans for the Biennium

Public health education plans for the ISDH include continuation of successful campaigns, activities, and programs as well as securing additional federal dollars. Maternal and Child Health Services funding will continue to be used for education and prevention activities and programs for improving the health of women, infants, children, and adolescents.

The ITPC Board approved several program changes to adjust to a decreased appropriation amount for fiscal years 2004 and 2005, such as reducing grant periods from 24 to 18 months and narrowing the scope of grant awards to limited interventions rather than comprehensive prevention and cessation plans.

